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# NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

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## ***1. What is the National School Lunch Program?***

The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in over 101,000 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 31 million children each school day in 2009. In 1998, Congress expanded the National School Lunch Program to include reimbursement for snacks served to children in afterschool educational and enrichment programs to include children through 18 years of age.

The Food and Nutrition Service administers the program at the Federal level. At the State level, the National School Lunch Program is usually administered by State education agencies, which operate the program through agreements with school food authorities.

## ***2. How does the National School Lunch Program work?***

Generally, public or nonprofit private schools of high school grade or under and public or nonprofit private residential child care institutions may participate in the school lunch program. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the lunch program get cash subsidies and donated commodities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve lunches that meet Federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced price lunches to eligible children. School food authorities can also be reimbursed for snacks served to children through age 18 in afterschool educational or enrichment programs.

## ***3. What are the nutritional requirements for school lunches?***

School lunches must meet the applicable recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend that no more than 30 percent of an individual's calories come from fat, and less than 10 percent from saturated fat. Regulations also establish a standard for school lunches to provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium, and calories. School lunches must meet Federal nutrition requirements, but decisions about what specific foods to serve and how they are prepared are made by local school food authorities.

## ***4. How do children qualify for free and reduced price meals?***

Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the National School Lunch Program. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals, for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents. (For the period July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011, 130 percent of the poverty level is \$28,665 for a family of four; 185 percent is \$40,793.)

Children from families with incomes over 185 percent of poverty pay a full price, though their meals are still subsidized to some extent. Local school food authorities set their own prices for full-price (paid) meals, but must operate their meal services as non-profit programs.

Afterschool snacks are provided to children on the same income eligibility basis as school meals. However, programs that operate in areas where at least 50 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals may serve all their snacks for free.

#### ***5. How much reimbursement do schools get?***

Most of the support USDA provides to schools in the National School Lunch Program comes in the form of a cash reimbursement for each meal served. The current (July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011) basic cash reimbursement rates if school food authorities served less than 60% free and reduced price lunches during the second preceding school year are:

<b>Free lunches:</b>	<b>Reduced-price lunches:</b>	<b>Paid lunches:</b>
<b>\$2.72</b>	<b>\$2.32</b>	<b>\$0.26</b>
<b>Free snacks:</b>	<b>Reduced-price snacks:</b>	<b>Paid snacks:</b>
<b>\$0.74</b>	<b>\$0.37</b>	<b>\$0.06</b>

Higher reimbursement rates are in effect for Alaska and Hawaii, and for schools with high percentages of low-income students. For the latest reimbursement rates visit FNS website at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/notices/naps/NAPs.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/notices/naps/NAPs.htm)

#### ***6. What other support do schools get from USDA?***

In addition to cash reimbursements, schools are entitled by law to receive USDA foods, called "entitlement" foods, at a value of 20.25 cents for each meal served in Fiscal Year 2010-2011. Schools can also get "bonus" USDA foods as they are available from surplus agricultural stocks.

Through Team Nutrition USDA provides schools with technical training and assistance to help school food service staffs prepare healthful meals, and with nutrition education to help children understand the link between diet and health.

#### ***7. What types of foods do schools get from USDA?***

States select entitlement foods for their schools from a list of various foods purchased by USDA and offered through the school lunch program. Bonus foods are offered only as they become available through agricultural surplus. The variety of both entitlement and bonus USDA foods schools can get from USDA depends on quantities available and market prices.

A very successful project between USDA and the Department of Defense (DoD) has helped provide schools with fresh produce purchased through DoD. USDA has also worked with schools to help promote connections with local small farmers who may be able to provide fresh produce.

***8. How many children have been served over the years?***

The National School Lunch Act in 1946 created the modern school lunch program, though USDA had provided funds and food to schools for many years prior to that. About 7.1 million children were participating in the National School Lunch Program by the end of its first year, 1946-47. By 1970, 22 million children were participating, and by 1980 the figure was nearly 27 million. In 1990, over 24 million children ate school lunch every day. In Fiscal Year 2009, more than 31.3 million children each day got their lunch through the National School Lunch Program. Since the modern program began, more than 219 billion lunches have been served.

***9. How much does the program cost?***

The National School Lunch Program cost \$9.8 billion in FY 2009. By comparison, the lunch program's total cost in 1947 was \$70 million; in 1950, \$119.7 million; in 1960, \$225.8 million; in 1970, \$565.5 million; in 1980, \$3.2 billion; in 1990, \$3.7 billion; and in 2000, 6.1 billion.

**For more information:**

For information on the operation of the National School Lunch Program and all the Child Nutrition Programs, contact the State agency in your state that is responsible for the administration of the programs. A listing of all our State agencies may be found on our web site at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd), select "Contact Us", then select "Child Nutrition Programs."

You may also contact us through the Office of Public Affairs (CGA) at 703-305-2281, or by mail at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 914, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. September 2010

# Reimbursable Meal Requirements

Reimbursable meals for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs have specific requirements based on the type of menu planning approach used. The three main menu planning approaches are Traditional Food-Based, Enhanced Food-Based, and Nutrient Standard Menu Planning.

## Food-Based Menu Planning

The two food-based menu planning approaches are made up of meal patterns. Based on the type meal being served (lunch, breakfast, or afterschool snack) a school meal must contain a specified quantity by age/grade group for each of the food components:

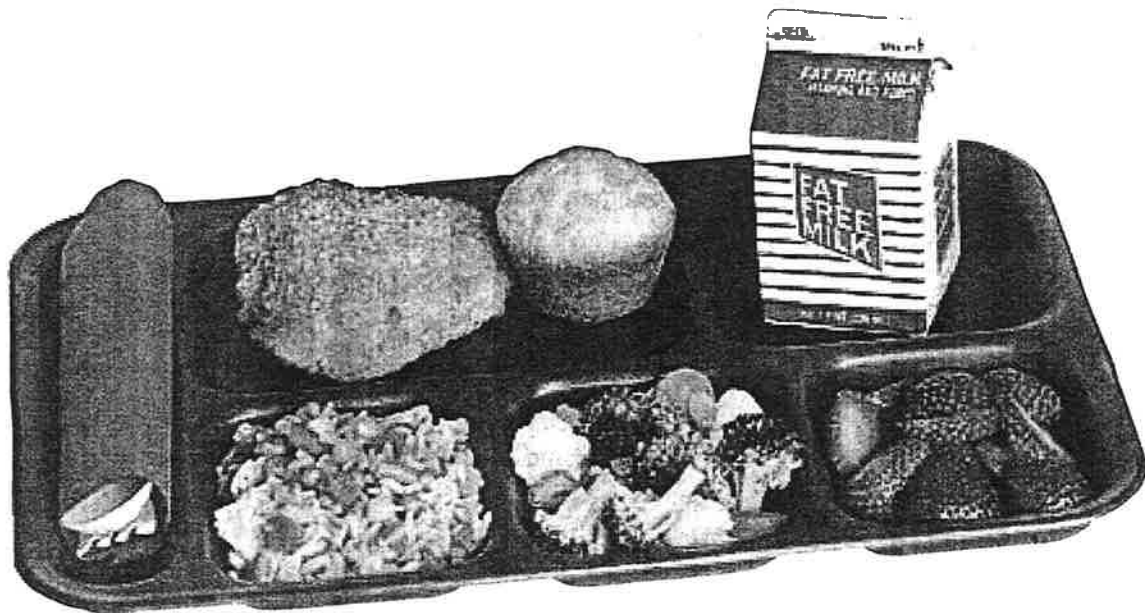
- Meat or meat alternate
- Vegetable or fruit
- Grains/breads
- Milk

The crediting contribution toward the food components is provided in each recipe.

## Nutrient Standard Menu Planning

Schools using Nutrient Standard Menu Planning must conduct nutrient analyses to plan school meals. Instead of working with specific food components in specific amounts, the menu planner analyzes the nutrient contributions from menu items served over a one week period. This analysis must meet the nutrition requirements for the age/grade group served.

The nutrient values per serving are provided for each recipe. For more information on any of the menu planning approaches see *A Menu Planner for Healthy School Meals* at [teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/menuplanner.html](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/menuplanner.html) or Book 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations parts 210 and 220. These regulations may be viewed online at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/regulations.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/regulations.htm).



# What The Recipes Will Help You Do

The standardized quantity recipes provided for you in this packet are designed to help you serve healthy, attractive breakfasts and lunches that will appeal to your student customers. To meet the needs of today's school foodservice programs, recipes must:

- be acceptable to students
- be economical
- be lower in fat and moderate in the use of added salt
- use a minimum number of ingredients and steps for preparation
- make maximum use of USDA-donated commodities
- accommodate regional and local needs and preferences

By using these recipes, you will be able to do the following:

## **1) Ensure product quality.**

The recipes developed for this project were designed to provide quality and yield consistency.

Taste panels of adults and students rated products for texture, taste, aroma, appearance, and overall quality.

## **2) Accurately predict the number of portions.**

This will allow you to simplify purchasing, reduce the amount of unnecessary inventory, and eliminate excessive amounts of leftovers.

## **3) Adjust the flavoring of each recipe to meet the expectations of your students.**

Many of the recipes provide information concerning additional ingredients that can be used to adjust the overall flavor of a recipe to more closely meet regional preferences. You will find these listed on individual recipe cards under optional ingredients or in a section called "Special Tips."

## **4) Obtain maximum benefit from the use of USDA-donated foods.**

Because schools often use USDA-donated foods in preparing meals, many of the recipes were developed and tested using available USDA commodities. This will help ensure that the final product of any recipe produced in the field will meet the same high standards for *quality* and *quantity* intended by the recipe developers.

## **5) Understand the nutritional value of each recipe.**

A nutritional analysis has been provided for each of the recipes. Many of these new or reformulated recipes have reduced added fat and/or sodium and some have increased the amount of dietary fiber.

## **6) Evaluate the specific contribution of each recipe toward the reimbursable meal.**

For your convenience, the food contribution toward the reimbursable meal for each portion of a recipe is specified on the recipe format.

## **7) Increase employee confidence.**

The recipes provide clear, concise directions that cover all aspects of production. This will help improve employee morale by reducing the confusion associated with non-standardized recipes.

First-rate results will also boost morale. The recipes are reliable and will produce consistent, high-quality meals. Employees will be confident and proud that they are serving the best quality products available.

## What Is Special About the Recipes?

**Plenty! For one thing, the recipes reflect what is happening with nutrition today.**

You will find many of them to be as low in fat as possible, without losing flavor and appeal. Many include lots of fruits, vegetables, and grains, and they will help you add variety.

A menu of these recipes will be a healthy experience for children. You will be giving them needed nutrients and energy—without a lot of added fat. You will also be helping them learn what it means to eat for good health.

**The recipes will help you “win kids over” with some exciting new flavors...and help you prepare some of their all-time favorites in healthier ways.**

A palette of diverse cultures is presented here. You will find, for example, Chicken Stir Fry and Teriyaki Sauce from the Orient and Tabouleh from the Middle East.

Adding a taste of Europe are such recipes as French Toast Sticks from France, Baked Fish Scandia from the Netherlands, Herbed Broccoli and Cauliflower Polonaise from Poland, and Minestrone, Vegetable Lasagna, and Chicken Tetrazzini from Italy.

The recipes also reflect the rich diversity of the United States. Southwest flavor is unmistakable in several. There are Chicken Fajitas, Marinated Black Bean Salad, Taco Pie, Vegetable Chili, and Arroz con Queso (Rice with Cheese), to name a few. The popular taste of New Orleans culture is found in the Baked Cajun Fish.

**The recipes have been carefully developed with both kids' TASTES and their good HEALTH in mind.**

To support the ideal of lowered fat, many of the recipes call for reduced-fat mozzarella and cheddar cheeses as well as reduced-fat mayonnaise, lowfat milk, and lowfat yogurt.

Versions of lower-fat Brownies and Chocolate Cake are included, using applesauce as a fat substitute. The taste of the recipes is the same familiar one; just the fat content has been changed.

The use of low-sodium soup stocks, gravy bases, and soy sauce help to reduce the sodium level in the recipes.

**AND, the recipes have been designed with YOU—the food preparer—in mind.**

We hope that as you read through, and use, these recipes you will find that they meet your needs. We have written the recipes with a limited number of steps, bearing in mind the equipment that you might have available.

## Quality-Quality-Quality

The items you serve to each student are only as good as the quality of ingredients and handling put into each recipe!

To ensure first-rate results:

### **Purchase the finest quality possible.**

If the brand of lemon gelatin you select is weakly flavored because it is inexpensive, you will not have a strong lemon flavor in the end product.

If the brand of chicken base has "salt" listed as the first ingredient, meaning it is the most *prevalent* ingredient, your Cream of Chicken Soup will not have a meaty chicken flavor.

### **Store and handle carefully.**

If the broccoli you put into the Broccoli Salad is old, dried, and wilted, the salad will not be crisp. And, many nutrients will be lost by the time you serve it.

If the frozen green beans in the Corn and Green Bean Casserole have been improperly handled by either the distributor or you — for instance, thawed and refrozen — your end product will not be the best possible.

Purchase from reliable sources and check your storage and handling procedures to assure topnotch **quality - quality - quality**.

### **Check your cooking techniques.**

If your cakes and brownies are overbaked because you are not using an oven thermometer to maintain exact oven temperatures, they will be dried out, tough, and crumbly.

If the stir-fry is not cooked in batches, or if it is *held* for a long period of time, the vegetables will not be brightly colored and crispy. They will be limp and uninviting.

**Batch-cooking** is cooking in small quantities to maintain high quality throughout the serving period. Each preparation should not exceed what can be served on the line in 15 minutes. This means there will be **continuous** cooking throughout the meal to guarantee quality.

